

Official Weekly Report for the Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq

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### THE ADVISOR

Volume 4



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The faces of Iraqi soldiers and police have been altered to protect their identities.

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#### ON THE COVER

Iraqi soldiers at Taji Army Base prepare to drive their new Iraqi Light Armored Vehicles, called Badgers, to their battalion operating area in Baghdad March 31.

Photo by U.S. Navy MC2 Elisandro Diaz

# U.S. Ambassador: Iraq is headed in the right direction

By Gerry J. Gilmore American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON** — Several positive developments indicate that Iraq's leaders and its people will eventually surmount insurgent violence occurring in the country and ultimately achieve stability, the former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, told reporters in Baghdad March 26.

"In my view, although difficult challenges lie ahead, and there is a long way to go, Iraq is fundamentally headed in the right direction and success is possible," Ambassador Khalilzad said at the news briefing.

President Bush has nominated Khalilzad, who has served as the top U.S. diplomat in Iraq for the past 21 months, to become the new U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Taking stock of the situation in Iraq, Khalilzad said he's buoyed and "cautiously optimistic" about that country's future due to several indicators:

- The early success of the Operation Law and Order anti-terrorist campaign in Baghdad and western Iraq
- The improved performance of Iraqi soldiers and police
- The Iraqi government's example of dealing evenhandedly with lawbreakers
- More Iraqis are turning their backs on al-Qaida
- Some Iraqi insurgent groups have agreed to fight al-Qaida terrorists and work toward reconciliation
- Iraq's leaders are reaching out to include all Iraqis in the sharing of the country's oil wealth
  - Improvement of Iraq's economy



Photo courtesy of Multi-National Force — Iraq Former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, speaks during his final press conference held at the Combined Press Information Center in Baghdad March 26.

— Iraqi leaders' comprehensive plan to achieve national reconciliation and stability

Indeed, ongoing joint Coalition and Iraqi security operations in Baghdad "appear to be having a positive effect," Khalilzad said, noting violence has decreased in Iraq's capital city by about 25 percent since Operation Law and Order began in mid February.

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"In my view, although difficult challenges lie ahead, and there is a long way to go, Iraq is fundamentally headed in the right direction and success is possible."

Zalmay Khalilzad, former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq

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# Commander, Iraqi Army Bomb Disposal School

The Iraqi Army Bomb Disposal School, located in Az Zubayr, is responsible for training soldiers to defeat the ever-increasing volume of threats presented by explosive ordnance devices. The school focuses on two major areas – mine detection and improvised explosive device disposal. Lt. Col. Ahmed, the school's commander and a 25-year Iraqi Army veteran, explained through an interpreter, the school's role in developing the capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces' EOD personnel.



# What kind of training does this school provide?

The school conducts training primarily for members of the Iraqi Army and also for the Iraqi Police in the disposal of bombs and improvised explosive devices.

# Why is this training facility important for Iraq's security?

There are more than 15 million mines throughout Iraq. Most are concentrated along the Iraqi and Iranian border because of the eight-year war with that country. There are also many mines along the border we share with Kuwait. We need trained soldiers to eliminate these threats. We also provide training in improvised explosive device disposal because most of the attacks carried out by insurgents are with this type of destructive device.

## Has this facility always been a school?

It was used for storing the Navy's ordnance in bunkers that still exist and there was a missile assembly factory at one time.

# How many servicemembers have been trained at the school?

We have trained a total of 967 servicemembers over the last three years since the school began.

#### How are the courses structured?

There are 19 courses offered at the school. Each one is three months long.



Photo by U.S. Navy MC2 Elisandro Diaz

An explosive ordnance disposal technician practices operating an EOD robot during training at the Iraqi Army Bomb Disposal School recently.

#### Why are the classes so long?

The classes are long because bomb disposal is dangerous work but the training we give the students makes their job easier. When soldiers are dealing with IEDs they have to be very precise. There's a motto in the bomb disposal community, "Your first mistake is your last mistake."

# Where do the students come from and where do they go after they finish?

The students are sent here by their division commanders and they return to those divisions to perform bomb disposal duties.

# How many bomb disposal companies are in the army now?

Iraq has 10 army divisions and we have one bomb disposal company in each of them.

## What is school's student failure rate?

We have about a twenty percent failure rate. The major cause is illiteracy. We send these students back to their units and they send us new students in return.

## What are your future plans for the school?

We can improve the school by offering new courses in modern electrical equipment, next-generation robots, and the latest metal and explosive detectors. New vehicles for the units will also help. In addition, the school is moving to the Besmaya Range Complex, a training facility closer to Baghdad.

#### What are you most proud of?

The success of the soldiers once they return to their units to work in bomb disposal means we have been successful in training them.

"In bomb disposal...

# your first mistake is your last mistake."

Iraqi Army Col. Ahmed, Commander, Iraqi Army Bomb Disposal School Page 4 April 1, 2007

# Sniffing for danger

By U.S. Navy MC2 Elisandro Diaz MNSTC-I Public Affairs

AZ ZUBAYR – Iraq was once considered one of the most mine-stricken nations in the world, according to U.S. State Department figures, with more than 10 to 15 million land mines buried in the country by 2003. Most of these mines were placed along Iraq's border with Iran during the 10-year war between the two rivals.

Coalition forces, along with governmental and nonprofit organizations, have contributed millions of dollars to clear many minefields in Iraq.

In order to remove them, land mines must first be identified – a difficult task, as they are not visible to the naked eye because they lie dormant buried below the surface.

Azhar, an Iraqi dog-handler, explained, "Our job is to detect subsurface mines and explosive materials with the help of dogs that we train for

this job." While there are machines and expensive sensing devices for the job, Azhar says the dog is the most accurate and friendliest.

According to Azhar, dogs are well suited to find mines because of their keen sense of smell. A dog's sense of smell is much more sensitive than a human's which allows dogs to detect substances that go unnoticed by the human nose. With proper training, dogs can use their sense of smell to find mines and other explosive materials.

"My primary duty as a dog handler is to train a dog so it becomes familiarized with finding mines that are buried in the ground," Azhar said.

Azhar described how mine detection teams operate. A team is made up of two dogs and their handlers. One dog begins to smell for explosives in a suspected minefield sectioned into square grids. The second dog and handler then repeats the process. This either confirms or denies whether the section is clear of mines.



A land mine, after it was located by a bomb-sniffing dog and unearthed by a bomb disposal technician, during training at the Az Zubayr Training Facility located in Az Zubayr March 20.

When a dog does locate a mine or other form of buried explosive, it alerts its handler who orders it to return to him and rewards it with a treat such as a rubber ball. The demining team then begins the task of removing the mine.

Azhar described how he began training his dog Malysh, a male purebred German shepard, after it arrived from the Netherlands.

"I began by placing a bowl of food with a small amount of explosive powder for Malysh to sniff. Once he got used to it I started burying it so he could find it. When a dog can readily identify an area that has explosive materials consistently and accurately it is moved to the minefields to do demining work," Azhar said.

"The best age to begin training dogs for mine detection is when they are one and a half years old. This is the age when they are mature enough and their sense of smell has developed sufficiently for the task of finding mines," Azhar said.

below the surface, according to Azhar, well within a dog's olfactory ability which can detect smells to a depth of 50 centimeters. However, there are several factors that can enhance or impede a dog's ability to locate mines which dog handlers must monitor as part of their task, he said.

Mines are buried 10 to 20 centimeters Photos by U.S. Navy MC2 Elisandro Diaz See DANGER, Page 5



A dog handler and his German shepard look for buried land mines during demining training at the Az Zubayr Training Facility March 20.

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# Man's best friend helps to save lives

#### From DANGER, Page 4

"Water can saturate the dirt making it hard or impossible for the dog to pick up the scent," he said. "That is why we don't work them when it rains."

Wind force and direction is another factor that can make it hard for a dog to pick up the scent of explosives. Heat also affects a dog's effectiveness – and health.

"This is why we only work our dogs during the early morning hours – from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. daily. Any longer and the heat quickly exhausts the dog," Azhar said.

Because Malysh got his obedience training in Dutch, he answers to commands in that language, he stated. "Malysh



A demining technician goes over an area with a metal detector after a bomb-sniffing dog located a mine during demining training at the Az Zubayr Training Facility March 20.

has learned and also responds to commands in Arabic, but only in a recreational setting – for demining work the commands are all in Dutch."

According to Azhar, there is a special bond between a dog handler and his dog which develops during their training together and is essential to the task of locating mines.

"To the dog the job is a game - that it does to get rewarded," Azhar said. "We train for six months to qualify for this task with six-day work weeks to prepare our dogs for this job."

While he stated he is very fond of Malysh, Azhar said he was not always comfortable around dogs.

"I like my dog. Before this job I was very scared of dogs and it took me a whole month before I lost my fear with them but now Malysh is like a very good friend and extremely loyal," Azhar said, "he would protect me without any hesitation."

"One time a friend was joking with me and pretended to box with me – Malysh quickly lunged at him to protect me, held back only by the leash."

The job of locating mines can be hazardous and has the potential of serious injury or death. Yet, the work he does is important for Azhar.

"I like my job because I help to remove things that kill people and children – I'm making Iraq a safe place for people to live and work," he said.



Photos by U.S. Navy MC2 Elisandro Diaz

A group of dog handlers and specially trained dogs wait to conduct landmine detection training at the Az Zubayr Training Facility March 20.

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# Joint operation provides medical assistance

By U.S. Army Sgt. Mike Pryor Multi-National Division – Baghdad Public Affairs

ADHAMIYAH – The little boy shyly enters Iraqi Army Chief Warrant Officer Ra'ad's examination room, peeking out from behind his mother's black chador. The boy, who has a runny nose and a bad cough, is better off than many of the patients the Iraqi medic has seen today in this vacant schoolhouse converted into an ad-hoc medical clinic. Still, Ra'ad treats him tenderly and pays careful attention to the list of symptoms the boy's mother describes. Then he gives her some decongestant medication and cough suppressant pills and sends them on their way.

For Ra'ad, medical officer of the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, taking care of patients with even minor illnesses is an investment in the future.

"Small sickness turns into big sickness. Maybe now he has just a cough, but if no one gives him medicine, later on it's big trouble," Ra'ad said.

Investing in the future of Adhamiyah by providing easy, basic medical care to residents was the goal of a medical assistance operation, sponsored by soldiers from the 3-2-6 Iraqi Army and paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, in the Hay Basateen community March 24.

More than 100 people were treated during the operation, the majority of them were women and children.

The operation took place inside a vacant school building. When the medics arrived they immediately began bringing in supplies and equipment. They quickly converted several classrooms and offices into treatment rooms, a patient waiting room, and a pharmacy. Outside, a crowd began to gather as word spread that the clinic was open. Many people arrived clutching X-rays and prescriptions that were years or even decades old.

As the first patients started funneling in, U.S. Army Capt. Lucas Leonard, with a stethoscope around his neck and a smile on his face, seemed to be everywhere. As one of the key planners of the event, Leonard, a trauma team leader with the 407th Brigade Support Battalion, was eager to see it succeed.

Leonard said if the event went well, it could have a positive impact not just on the health of the local people, but also on their impression of Iraqi and Coalition forces.

"The benefit for them is that we can treat a wide variety of outpatient conditions that they may not be able to see a doctor about. The benefit for us is that it shows the people we care," Leonard said.

According to U.S. Army 1st Lt. Brook Carrier, assistant civil military operations officer for 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, the community of Hay Basateen was chosen as the site of the operation because of its poor overall health situation and because of the willingness of community leaders to cooperate with Iraqi and Coalition forces.

"We put this in place because we know there's a lack of medical care in this area and as a reward for the community's cooperation," Carrier said.



Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Mike Pryor

Iraqi families wait to be seen by Iraqi and Coalition medics at a day-long medical assistance operation in Basateen, Adhamiyah March 24.

The operation also gave residents of Adhamiyah a chance to see Iraqi Security Forces working with Coalition forces in a friendly environment. At a time when the role of the Iraqi Army is undergoing a major shift from a focus on war-fighting to more of a police-type mission - letting people see Iraqi Army soldiers working hard to improve the quality of life in the community is important, said Ra'ad.

"They see we don't come here for war, we come here for security," he said.

Iraqi soldiers took the lead, provided crowd control and guarded the entrance to the clinic. But, the Iraqi Medic's presence in the treatment room proved to be an even more welcome sight for some local people. Ra'ad said many of his patients were first surprised, then delighted to find out they were going to be treated by an Iraqi medic.

"They think I am an American. I say - No, I am Iraqi! They are very happy to see an Iraqi helping them," he said.

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# Khalilzad is optimistic of Iraq's future

#### From IRAQ, Page 2

The Iraqi Security Forces "are performing better and they are doing better in terms of carrying their share of the burden," Khalilzad pointed out. Iraqis seem to appreciate the presence of their soldiers and police on the streets to help effect stability, he said, noting citizen-provided tips about insurgent activity have been flowing in steadily.

Also, the Iraqi government is bolstering its credibility among its citizens, Khalilzad said, by dispensing justice fairly without discriminating against any one group. Iraqi involvement with al-Qaida is on the wane, Khalilzad said, adding that some insurgent elements have openly turned against al-Qaida.

Some of these insurgents are "in touch with the (Iraqi) government, seeking reconciliation and cooperation in the fight against al-Qaida terrorists," the ambassador said.

And, the recent approval of a national hydrocarbon law that shares the nation's oil wealth with all citizens demonstrates that the Iraqi government is reaching out to all Iraqis, Khalilzad added.

Iraq's economic situation is looking up, and the Iraqi government has committed \$10 billion for reconstruction programs. Iraqi leaders have also adopted measures on fuel import liberalization, investment law reform and fuel subsidy reductions, as well as maintaining fiscal discipline," he said.

According to Khalilzad, Iraq's leaders also are taking steps

to achieve good relations with neighboring countries, while continuing government efforts to achieve reconciliation between the nation's different sects and tribes.

"Also, the United States and Iraq have agreed on a combination of pressure and engagement to create incentives for changes in behavior on the part of states currently seeking to destabilize Iraq," noted the ambassador.

Recognizing these are all significant indicators and developments for Iraq, he said, more needs to be accomplished to maintain the positive momentum.

"Iraqi leaders need to enact a program to demobilize militias, make amendments to the constitution, schedule provincial elections, and reformulate the de-Ba'atification program so that insurgents can lay down their arms and join the political process," Khalilzad said.

"Iraqis have an unprecedented opportunity" to establish a better life for themselves, Khalilzad said. "Yet, Americans and their elected representatives would like the Iraqi government to achieve more progress involving reconciliation, constitutional amendments and other issues.

"The members of the Coalition as well as other countries have made enormous sacrifices to give Iraqis the chance to build a stable and democratic order," Khalilzad said. "Iraqis must not lose this opportunity, and they must step up and take the tough decisions necessary for success."

## **NATO** course graduates National Operations Center Staff

**BAGHDAD** - Thirty-two students graduated from a National Operations Center staff course 27 March. A graduation ceremony was held at the NATO Training Mission - Iraq headquarters in the International Zone.

The NOC staff course consisted of classroom training and practical exercises focusing on staff procedures, planning, information management, and computer skills. Coalition commands throughout Iraq assisted in the sessions.

In September of last year, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki, created the National Operations Center in order to coordinate all national defense and law enforcement activities. Directly subordinate to the Prime Minister, the NOC will maintain situational awareness of events nationwide. Regional centers called Provincial Joint Coordination Centers will be tied into the NOC to ensure rapid dissemination of information and to ensure national command authority is fully informed of activities throughout the countries 10 provinces.



Photo by Steinar Sveinsson

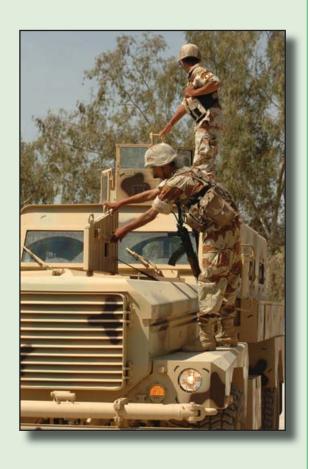
A graduation ceremony takes place at the NATO Training Mission - Iraq headquarters for 32 students who completed the National Operations Center staff course March 27.

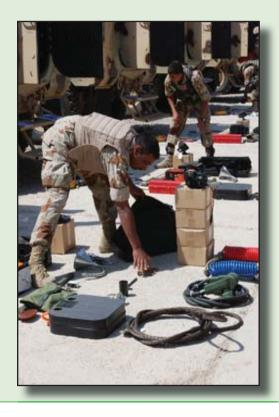
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# Rolling out

TAJI, Iraq — Iraqi soldiers prepare 40 newly arrived Iraqi Light Armored Vehicles for the drive back to their battalion in Baghdad. The ILAVs, called Badgers, were purchased by the Iraqi government as part of its modernization program. The delivery constitutes a portion of the 397 ILAVs that are to be delivered this year. In total, the Iraqi government has pledged \$2.6 billion to modernize the Iraqi Armed Forces.







Photos by U.S. Navy MC2 Elisandro Diaz

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### **IRAQI SECURITY FORCES /** in brief

#### Insurgent captured

**BAGHDAD** — Iraqi and Coalition forces captured a suspected insurgent tied to explosively-formed projectile facilitation networks during a joint operation March 30 while targeting anti-Iraqi forces in Sadr City.

The suspect is allegedly involved with several violent extremist groups responsible for attacks against the Iraqi people and Coalition forces and facilitating the movement of EFPs into Iraq.

- Multi-National Force - Iraq Public Affairs

#### Operation disrupts extremist power base

**BAQUBAH** — Iraqi Security Forces continue joint operations with Coalition forces targeted at destroying an Islamic State of Iraq power base in the Diyala River Valley in Baqubah March 28.

Iraqi Security and Coalition forces killed more than 25 insurgents and detained more than 15 suspected terrorists.

The operation also netted eight weapons caches.

The ongoing operation has netted eight weapons caches consisting of small-arms munitions, more than 60 grenades, rocket-propelled munitions, improvised explosive device-making material and other terrorist equipment.

The detainees are being held for further questioning.

The operation, which began March 24, continues to destroy enemy safe havens in the Diyala River Valley.

- Multi-National Division - North Public Affairs

#### Chlorine attack foiled by Iraqi Forces

**FALLUJAH** — Iraqi Security Forces repelled a complex attack at the Fallujah Government Center, including two suicide truck bombs containing chlorine March 28.

The attack began with mortar fire, followed by two truck bombs and small arms fire. Iraqi Police identified the first suicide attacker and fired on the truck, causing it to detonate before reaching the compound. Iraqi Army soldiers spotted the second suicide truck approaching the gate and engaged it with small arms fire, causing it to also detonate near the entrance of the compound.

No civilian, Iraqi or Coalition forces casualties were reported. - Multi-National Force - West Public Affairs

#### Operation disarms insurgents in Hillah

**HILLAH** — Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition advisors conducted a city-wide weapons confiscation campaign in Hillah March 27.

Iraqi soldiers and Hillah Police conducted the cordon and search operation to seize unauthorized weapons.

Weapons confiscated included 124 AK-47 rifles, 15 other assault rifles, fifteen pistols, one shotgun, 84 AK-47 ammunition magazines and 10 pistol magazines. Also, 18 sticks of C-4 explosives were found. There were 14 insurgents captured and held for questioning.

More than 700 Iraqi Security Forces personnel took part in the operation.

- Multi-National Division - Baghdad Public Affairs



Photos by U.S. Army Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma

## **Arrowhead** Strike 9

An Iraqi citizen cooperates with Iraqi and Coalition soldiers during a vehicle inspection in Baghdad's Ghazaliyah neighborhood recently. The inspection took place in conjunction with house searches as part of a joint operation coined "Arrowhead Strike 9."

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### IRAQI SECURITY FORCES / in brief

#### Iraqi Army detains 38 suspected terrorists

**MAHMUDIYAH** — Iraqi Army and Coalition forces detained 38 suspected terrorists, discovered an improvised explosive device and seized five weapons caches south of Baghdad March 27 during Operation Eagle Thunder III.

Two of the detainees were wanted for ties to terrorism, five were carrying illegal weapons and four others were in a vehicle that contained an AK-47, four magazines and a hand grenade.

The caches included anti-Iraqi propaganda, an insurgent information booklet, two bags of of homemade explosives, a rocket propelled grenade launcher with five rockets, one 122mm projectile, one propane tank and various small arms ammunition.

A command-wired IED was also discovered.

The caches were destroyed by an explosive ordnance disposal team and the detainees are being held for further questioning.

- Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

#### Local tips lead to five suspected terrorists

**BAGHDAD** — Iraqi Security and Coalition forces responding to tips from local residents detained eight suspected terrorists and discovered four weapons caches during joint operations in the Al Mansour district March 26.

Three of the weapons caches were found in an abandoned house. They included an 82mm mortar tube, two AK-47 assault rifles, one shotgun, two 9mm pistols, two black ski masks, and electronic components used for making improvised explosive devices.

Iraqi soldiers discovered a fourth weapons cache in the

Al Shaheed Mosque consisting of two rocket propelled grenade boosters, five AK-47 assault rifles with 12 magazines, one hand grenade, four rolls of concertina wire and a box of medical supplies.

Over the last six days of clearing operations Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition troops have detained 63 suspected terrorists, discovered 27 weapons caches and found two prepared car bombs.

- Multi-National Division - Iraq Public Affairs

#### One terrorist killed and 71 suspects detained

**LATIFIYAH** — Iraqi soldiers killed one terrorist, detained 71 suspects and discovered weapons caches during anti-terrorist operations in Latifiyah March 25.

A field hospital that was used to treat terrorist elements was also discovered during the operation.

The weapons caches included two VBIEDs, four anti-aircraft rounds, AK-47 ammunition, a machine gun and several mortar rounds of various sizes.

Iraqi Ministry of Defense Public Affairs

#### Iraqi Army discovers home-made explosives

**RADWANIYAH** — Iraqi and Coalition forces discovered a cache of home-made explosives in Radwaniyah March 25 during a joint combat patrol, consisting of explosives hidden in potato sacks, totaling 700 pounds.

The cache was destroyed by an explosive ordnance disposal team.

- Multi-National Division - Baghdad Public Affairs

# Joint Operations

Members from the Iraqi Army and Coalition forces work side-by-side during the joint operation "Arrowhead Strike 9" in Baghdad's Ghazaliyah beladiyah - Arabic for neighborhood - March 23.



Photo by U.S. U.S. Army Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma